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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, CONSTITUTION, REFERENDUM, NATIONAL RECONCILIATION; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: Discussion on the Constitution, Referendum, and National Reconciliation were the major editorial themes of the daily newspapers on October 27, 2005. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES

[1A. "Habitue!"](#)
(Al-Bayyan - affiliated with Ad-Dawa (led by Al-Ja'fari), no bias, published this page-three editorial by Zainab Al-Khafaji)

"The head of the National Dialogue Council's, Saleh Al-Mutlag, negative attitude toward the referendum results (claiming they were rigged) wasn't a surprise but rather was an identical position of many Iraqis who are used to his habitual attitudes. Why didn't he present a list of accusations and evidence to prove the illegality of the process?

"The political process in Iraq has been exposed to attempts to inhibit participation by, among others, the National Dialogue Council which has forgotten that its role is to develop dialogue but has instead, become a source of propagating accusations and suspicions in an attempt to keep people preoccupied and to waste their time.

"Many examples of these attempts to raise political comments are evident, they come at transformational stages. What is really important now is to continue towards the next step, not to go backwards and chase accusations devoid of evidence. I don't think that the accusations of vote-rigging are useful any longer. The Council endorsed the results of the two provinces that rejected the constitution, Al-Anbar and Salahadin, but considered the results from Mosul to have been rigged.

"Their sectarian ideology cannot tolerate 'yes' percentages that are too close to 'no' percentages in provinces with Sunni majorities. The final results were indicative of Iraqi interests in bypassing sectarianism."

[1B. "The Battle to Alter the Constitution Has Begun"](#)
(Az-Zaman, independent, anti-coalition published this front-page unattributed editorial)

"Following the approval of the constitution, the battle to alter it has begun-the fight to restore sovereignty and liberate Iraq from new delineations that threaten its social unity.

The constitution was drafted in a way that makes its weak points strengthening factors; it is a constitution that could take many additional constitutions to define it. Therefore, the battle over its alteration will take two directions:

"The first is an explanation of the battle: Each article in this constitution could require two or more explanations, which means the next conflict hinges on the ability of each party to interpret certain articles according to their own interests and cause Iraqis to ask, 'Are we really in disagreement with each other-to that degree'?

"The second thing is a battle to correct words and phrases that contradict the spirit of forgiveness and neutrality and instead foment division and sectarianism. As a result of the recent amendment to the constitution (shortly before the referendum) the wounded Iraqi psyche has been healed and we are ready to adapt strange interpretations such as those related to the 'Wilayat Al-Faqih' [the rule of supreme

religious authorities, e.g. The Islamic Republic of Iran]. We need to resolve the establishment of districts that might be under the influence of neighboring countries [i.e. Iran] in order to adopt an accurate implementation of federalism. The battle to alter the constitution also entails clarification of women's rights which in some articles have relegated women to the archaic past.

"Certain parties have attempted to portray the battle over the constitution as a sectarian conflict among the Iraqi people, while ignoring the origins of the friction. The true source of conflict is between ambitions and forward-looking ideas to establish a modern developed Iraq built on its heritage of civilized accomplishments, and other ideas focused on old, limited sectarian understandings that are no longer useful in the 21st century.

"If there is a conflict in Iraq then it is, without doubt, between ignorant groups hiding behind sectarianism and other ancient principles, and modern open-minded groups that do not differentiate among people, based on religion or sect.

"The battle over altering the constitution should be peaceful and civilized in order to change the constitution's negative articles; in this way, the constitution will be a unifying document not a document for sedition and division."

1C. "Parliamentary Council"

(As-Sabah - Iraqi Media Network, pro-coalition, published this front-page editorial by Mohammed Abdul Jabar Al-Shabbot)

"According to our new permanent constitution the name of the new parliament will be the 'parliamentary council' which equates to the House of Representatives; this is a beautiful inspiration for us and for our elected representatives. Elected members of the parliament are our representatives and we have empowered them to speak for us. They will not represent their sects, religions, regions, ethnicities or parties but instead will represent us. I hope that voters have learned and drawn good conclusions from their previous election experience, and vote for qualified, capable candidates whom we have knowledge of (regarding their character and history)--we should vote for the best candidates for our next parliament.

"The parliament's schedule will be loaded because those who wrote the permanent draft constitution deliberately postponed many pending matters for the coming parliament to resolve. Personally I have counted more than sixty items in the draft constitution, some are basic and others are outlined in great detail.

"The most important thing about the permanent constitution is that the legislative authority of the state will consist of two councils, one parliamentary and the other a unity council (article 46). The draft constitution stipulated details about the parliamentary council but ignored the unity council and left it for the next council to regulate (article 62).

"This means we will begin our constitutional life with a lame legislative authority and wait for the parliament to define the unity council. Parliament should take about six months to specify legislation for executive procedures and the formation of regional laws (article 114) that govern sects. This is why voters must be attuned to their choices for the coming election-especially since new electoral procedures will allow for a better introduction to and knowledge about candidates."

1D. "Our Positions Are Meant to Serve the Nation"

(Dar As-Salam - weekly, affiliated with [Sunni] Iraqi Islamic Party led by Mohsin Abdul-Hameed, anti-coalition, published this front-page unattributed editorial)

"Patient Iraqis are still suffering from the difficult conditions they face-under occupation. Their rights are challenged on a daily basis, their freedoms are increasingly restricted, their cities suffer from invasion, their families displaced and they are facing ethnic cleansing. All of this is happening with the consent of the government which is unable to take action while the occupation forces insist on using violence and the destruction of cities to mitigate the morass of occupying Iraq which is finally sinking in.

"We have come a long way to achieving stability but we're finding more obstacles restricting our efforts, though many people still believe their suffering will end. Recently there has been increasing concern about vote tampering and there is evidence to support it. If these allegations are verified it will only serve to increase the tension the country is currently enduring and it will lead to our rejection of the process. We are against suppressing people's wishes or their abilities to determine their

future.

"The Iraqi Islamic Party will seize any chance to create progress and alleviate tension-the party is keen on accomplishing security, halting the bloodshed of innocent Iraqis and saving the country from the chaos it has lived through for the past two years.

"Therefore, we'll continue with our political and national policy which is against suppression of the people. We will continue to defend and demand the rights of our followers which have been robbed by others. The announcement of the results of the constitution coupled with detainees in the U.S. and Iraqi prisons fuel our commitment to the promises we gave our followers and our people. The Iraqi Islamic Party will not relinquish national or Islamic principles and will work hard, in spite of detentions, assassinations, and the bias of seditious people in order to create a free, independent, and strong Iraq."

1E. "Iraqis Accept Their Constitution"
(Al-Ittihad - affiliated with PUK, led by Jalal Talabani, pro-coalition, published this page-three editorial by Abdul Hadi Mehdi)

"After ten days of monitoring and verification of the results of the referendum, the IECI yesterday announced the acceptance of the constitution by the Iraqi people by a percentage of 78.59 %.

"Iraqis now have their permanent constitution, after living for many decades under a provisional one which controlled the country according to the rulers' moods and special interests which were far different than the problems the people faced. Above and beyond that, they did not know what their constitution included or regulated and they had no choice but to accept what was forced on them and what served the interests of the ruling system.

"No party or powerful ruling entity in Iraq now obliges the Iraqi people to accept the new constitution. Rather, the opposite is true--it is apparent that the Iraqi people expressed their free will on constitution day-October 15--which was the first time in the history of Iraq or the region that people were able to vote on a referendum, their country's constitution. This was tremendously significant for them, being governed by the ballot boxes and ending decades of being forced to live according to the opinions of others.

"The acceptance of the constitution was a victory for all--for those who participated in the constitution and for those who did not take part. Those people knew that if the constitution succeeded and was applied, it would not only embrace those who voted yes or those who rejected it, but that it would envelop all Iraqis from end to end.

"The constitution achieved so much that all Iraqis can be proud of. One such achievement was going to the ballot boxes--that is considered civilized. This means that the new Iraq has no place for anyone who wants to force his ideas and will on others. The democratic environment that is prevailing in Iraq paints a new picture for those who imagine Iraq as a country of destruction, killing, looting and a place for car bombs.

"This is Iraq, the ballots, not weapons, governed by the majority of Iraqis who say 'Yes.' CONGRATULATIONS to the Iraqis for their permanent constitution."

SATTERFIELD